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# Implementing and Interpreting Fazlur Rahman's Islamic Moderation Concept in the Indonesian Context

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## Abstract

Although, Indonesians are known as the most ‘tolerant’ nation but the radical turn of events over the period of time has transformed their religious tolerance into extremism. Therefore, several movements have started to alter Indonesia's Islamic model into a one more compatible with that of the Arab world. These are not social conflicts but could become reason of provoking different social conflicts. It has been claimed that these social conflicts occur because Indonesia has followed westernization, Christianization, secularism, liberalism and the unfair attitude of the West in the Middle East conflicts, especially between Palestine and Israel. The majority of Indonesians are Muslims therefore, democratization is studied thoroughly using a religious moderation theory in the context of Islamic religion and religious doctrine. This study aims to discuss Fazlur Rahman's double movement hermeneutics as an Islamic moderation concept by using Qur’anic references. This moderation concept could be applied to the Indonesian context. A bibliographical survey and an interpretive method have been employed to reveal a specific nature of religious moderation, which prohibits Muslims from taking an extreme stance about religious provisions. Moderation is not limited to religious attitudes but includes all aspects of life. Therefore, this study implicates that if Fazlur Rahman’s Islamic moderation concepts are practiced comprehensively in Indonesia then social harmony would prevail as a social phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Islamic doctrine, Religious moderation, *Tafsir*, Verse of the Qur’ān

## Introduction

Despite of the fact that, Indonesia is a vast and very diverse country, Indonesia has diverse cultures, religions, ethnicities, and languages; in other words, it is a multicultural nation. Although, diversity is a nation’s strength, it could also present a significant problem because it could become a catalyst for any conflict.<sup>1</sup> Religions may turn into a hazardous source of conflict if they are not properly handled because religions touch the most sensitive and emotional side of human emotions. The diversity and safety of Indonesia has attracted and urged the researchers interest.<sup>2</sup> One of the positive growing elements in Indonesia is a moderate model.<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) of Indonesia reported that the total Muslim population in Indonesia is 237.53 million people as

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<sup>1</sup>A H Usman et al., “The Concept of an Ideal Society: A Review of Fazlur Rahman’s Perspective,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 21 (2022): 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.21.2022.220>.

<sup>2</sup>Dacher Keltner, and Jonathan Haidt, “Approaching Awe, a Moral, Spiritual, and Aesthetic Emotion,” *Cognition and Emotion* 17, no. 2 (2003): 297–314.

<sup>3</sup>Marcus Mietzner, “10 Indonesian Parties Revisited: Systemic Exclusivism, Electoral Personalisation and Declining Intraparty Democracy,” *From Stagnation To Regression?*, 2020, 191.

recorded in December 31, 2021. This number is equivalent to 86.9% of the country's population which reached 273.32 million people recently; most of this population applies the *Shafi'i Mazhab*.<sup>4</sup>

Several scholarly studies at top universities in the US, European countries, and Australia<sup>5</sup> reported that Indonesian Muslims are much more committed to Islamic ideas and practices.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Islam in Indonesia has been developed as a result of a lengthy dialectical process with very diverse Indonesian cultures.<sup>7</sup> The analytical process forms a separate model of Indonesian Islam that is different from Islamic models in the Middle Eastern countries.<sup>8</sup> The Indonesian Islamic model refers to the *wasati* (balanced) model that brings the concept of moderation to Indonesian Islam.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, this discovery does not assure that Indonesian Muslims could become a model for Islam worldwide. In contrast, some Indonesian Muslims believe that their faith is less “pure,” similar to syncretism, and different from Arab Muslims. Recently, a ‘purification movement’ inspired by Islamic practices in Arab world has begun which provided a clear picture of Islamic interpretations as a religious of Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. As mentioned earlier, protracted conflicts in the Arab-Islamic world could not illustrate or represent the Islamic worldview.

Several movements have started to alter Indonesia's Islamic model into a one more compatible with that of the Arab world. However, these movements have caused multiple social conflicts, such as more severe intolerance and more frequent extreme acts. It is claimed that these social conflicts occur because Indonesia has imitated or adopted western culture (Westernization),<sup>10</sup> Christianization activities,<sup>11</sup> secularism, liberalism, and the unfair attitude of the West in the Middle East conflicts, especially between Palestine and Israel. Several radical efforts have emerged such as the Bali Bombings in 2002, the Surabaya Three Church Bombings in 2018, and the Makassar Cathedral Church Suicide Bombing in 2021.<sup>12</sup> Islamic moderation in Indonesia did not face challenges posed by extremism, radicalization, and terrorism. These initiatives and movements are a result of the international Islamic movement's knowledge and application.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Kemendagri, “273 Juta Penduduk Indonesia Terupdate Versi Kemendagri [273 Million Indonesian Population Updated Version of the Ministry of Home Affairs],” [dukcapil.kemendagri.go.id](https://dukcapil.kemendagri.go.id), 2022, <https://dukcapil.kemendagri.go.id/berita/baca/1032/273-juta-penduduk-indonesia-terupdate-versi-kemendagri>.

<sup>5</sup>Ahmad Ali Nurdin, “Islam and State: A Study of the Liberal Islamic Network in Indonesia, 1999-2004,” *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 7, no. 2 (2005): 20.

<sup>6</sup>Azyumardi Azra, “Islam's Moderation and Radicalism: A Special Context to Southeast Asian Islam,” in *Handbook of Cultural Security* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018).

<sup>7</sup>Aam Saepul Alam, Rafiudin Rafiudin, and Adang Sonjaya, “Comparison of Nurcholis Madjid and A. Hasyim Muzadi's Thoughts on Renewal in Indonesia,” *International Journal Of Islamic Khazanah* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1-10.

<sup>8</sup>Luthfi Assyaukanie, *Islam and the Secular State in Indonesia* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009).

<sup>9</sup>Azra, “Islam's Moderation and Radicalism: A Special Context to Southeast Asian Islam.”

<sup>10</sup>Ali Maksum, “Discourses on Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: A Study on the Intellectual Debate between Liberal Islam Network (JIL) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI),” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 11, no. 2 (2017): 405–22.

<sup>11</sup>Alexander R Arifianto, “Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia: Tracing the Origins of Kristenisasi and Islamisasi,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20, no. 1 (2009): 73-89.

<sup>12</sup>Ribut Priadi, Syukur Kholil, and Iskandar Zulkarnain, “ISIS Terror on Detik. Com Online Media in Indonesia [ISIS Terror on Detik.Com Online Media in Indonesia],” *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, (2018): 451-64.

<sup>13</sup>Azra, “Islam's Moderation and Radicalism: A Special Context to Southeast Asian Islam.”

Radical actions occur in Indonesia, other Islamic nations, and Western nations. Since, September 11, 2001 the concept of 'Moderation' in religion, particularly in Islam has received a lot of attention from the world, especially from West. However, western world is interested in religious moderation in Islamic nations because this moderation is frequently targeted by radicalism. Therefore, western discourse on religious moderation discusses directions of liberalism and secularism more frequently. Of course, these ideas disagree with Islamic moderation principles. Secularism and liberalism are extreme ideologies that run against Islamic principles. Consequently, Indonesians, particularly Muslim minorities are not motivated by Western ideology like secularism, and liberalism but, by the Islamic teachings for the application of religious moderation. The Islamic understanding of religious moderation is applicable in Indonesia and is discussed in this current research. One of the understandings is proposed by Fazlur Rahman's interpretation which involves two movements: going back in time and placing proper contexts for authentic Islamic interpretation.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Fazlur Rahman's Hermeneutics

A new reading or interpretation of the Qur'ān is the foundation of Fazlur Rahman's reform plan. Fazlur Rahman incorporated an idiosyncratic conventional methodology for a systematic interpretation to highlight his concept of hermeneutics. This methodology focuses on social and legal issues. Therefore, Rahman employed a logical-synthesis process rather than a systematic interpretation technique to address metaphysical and theological topics. He further asserted that none of the hermeneutic techniques can help him interpret the scriptures as he desires. Therefore, the selected theory does not come from one hermeneutic expert. Rahman has developed a methodology that consists of two parts: the socio-historical approach (initiated in 1970) and the theory of dual movements (1982). As a result, 'double movement hermeneutics' is a more popular name for Rahman's hermeneutics. To simplify this concept, double movement hermeneutics combined several simultaneous motions with a socio-historical perspective.

Additionally, Rahman puts the socio-historical approach into practice in the following stages. Firstly, he defined *Sunnah* and Hadīth in detail. He characterized *Sunnah* in this context as a standard that Muslim generations in the past aspired to adapt the Prophet's (SAW) teachings according to their particular needs and new knowledge. Although, *Sunnah* varies depending on the locality, this interpretation is ongoing and evolving and is also known as the *Sunnah*.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Rahman argued that *Sunnah* is a practical tradition of Prophet (SAW) while Hadīth is the verbal tradition of Prophet (SAW). Secondly, Rahman exhibited high respect but only in proportion.

Rahman's *Sunnah* is divided into three categories: *sunnaḥ* ideal, actual *sunnaḥ*, and the *sunnaḥ* of life. Based on this concept, Rahman divided the understanding of Hadīth and *Sunnah* into two kinds. Firstly, *Sunnah* is "normative" and comes in *Sunnah* with verbal values. The idea of *Sunnah*, which is considered as an example, protection, and guidance, refers to the Prophet (SAW) and is specific; thus, this concept requires historical-sociological understanding. *Sunnah* in a normative context is called '*ḥadīth*'. Secondly, the non-verbal *Sunnah* in the form of the Prophet's (SAW) tradition is carried out secretly or in 'a silent living tradition'. Then, this *Sunnah* is interpreted by the friends of the Prophet (SAW) and people who have the enthusiasm to imitate the Prophet's (SAW) behaviour.

Rahman did not want to adopt any hadith that is not criticized. The criterion is the conformity of the hadith text (*matan*) with the teachings of the Qur'ānic references and reasons. The example of authentic Hadīths from Bukhari and Muslim rejected by Rahman is as follows. "Whoever says 'There is no god but Allah' will enter Heaven. As for the question of the Companions about whether

<sup>14</sup>Fazlur Rahman, "A Recent Controversy over the Interpretation of" *Shūrā*," *History of Religions* 20, no. 4 (1981): 291-301.

the gates of Heaven will be opened for those who say it but they commit adultery and steal, the Prophet agreed." Furthermore, Rahman argued that this Hadīth is not acceptable because it contradicts with Qur'ān. The Qur'ān strictly does not separate the righteous deeds and faith. According to Qur'ān, it is impossible to assess someone's religion without also observing their real performance of good deeds.

The socio-historical method only requires context when the verse is revealed. Therefore, it is necessary to take the next step that is 'Dual Movement Hermeneutics', to contextualize today's readers. The dual motion hermeneutics is Fazlur Rahman's most original and strategic work. Hermeneutics dual movement is a theory to understand the Qur'ān by looking at current situation, the time when the Qur'ān was revealed, and finally back to the present. Therefore, Rahman's approach is intended toward the texts of the past that are still applicable today. Dual motion hermeneutics consists of two stages: (a) the distinction of a certain law from moral ideals and (b) the application of these moral ideals to certain cases today.

Fazlur Rahman makes a clear distinction between the literal interpretation of Qur'ān's legal provisions, which raise specific rules, norms, and regulations, and moral ideals or Qur'ān's core principles, which are given as a gift to nature.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, virtues of justice (*'qist*), fraternity (*'akhawah*), and equality are prioritized in fundamental concepts (*musawah*). Consequently, Qur'anic teachings and practices are focused on the understanding of moral principles and ethical worldview.<sup>16</sup> The first movement includes following two stages:

- a. Understanding the meaning of verses of Qur'ān concerning specific teachings is a response to particular situations. The primary focus of this stage is to look at the micro context of the verse, namely narrow situation that occurred in the Prophet's (SAW) environment when Qur'ān was revealed. In this stage, *asbab an-nuzul* plays an important role.
- b. Specific answers are generalized and expressed as statements with a general moral-social goal (moral ideal) by paying attention to a macro context—a situation that occurs on a broader scale and involves society, religion, and Arab customs at the time of the arrival of Islam, especially Mecca and its surroundings. This stage produces desired general moral-social goals behind the specific response.

The second movement is a process that goes from general to specific ideas that must be formulated and followed now. This requires a thorough evaluation of current state and an understanding of all constituent parts. Therefore, Rahman consistently emphasized Qur'ān's strong moral ethos.<sup>17</sup> The importance of upholding morality has been emphasized throughout Islamic history because this moral vision has been compromised as a result of social, economic, and political goals. It seems that Islam has educated its followers to use violence rather than promoting social justice, freedom, equality, tolerance, and other ideals.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1 Moderating Specific Legal Religious Issues

The 286 verses of Surah Al-Baqarah of Qur'ān were revealed in Medina. At that time, tribes from all across Medina, including original Arabs, Jews, and Persians, had already transformed the city into a 'cosmopolitan' and 'international' City. Therefore, there were already Jewish and

<sup>15</sup>Usman et al., "The Concept of an Ideal Society: A Review of Fazlur Rahman's Perspective."

<sup>16</sup>Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (University of Chicago Press, 2020).

<sup>17</sup>Navin G Haider Ali, "Concept of Shūra in Fazlur Rahman's Political Ideas at Practical Level," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 8, no. 2 (2018): 110–26.

<sup>18</sup>Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, vol. 15 (University of Chicago Press, 1984).

Christian communities residing in this city. It indicates that Medina was an extremely diverse city with different races, nations, religions, civilizations, and world views. Therefore, problems in heterogeneous communities are undoubtedly more complex than in homogeneous societies. These difficulties are described in the number of verses of Surah Al-Baqarah. Al-Baqarah had been descended for ten years while Prophet (SAW) was staying in Medina<sup>19</sup> because Al Baqarah covers many significant themes according to the complexities of communities residing in Medina. The name of this Surah 'Al-Baqarah', refers to a central theme that describes the story of children of Israel with a cow. Hence, Surah Al-Baqarah explains and proves the truth of the holy book and therefore, it is appropriately guided and followed.

In its long history, the children of Israel have spread to various places, including Mecca and Medina. Medina was already a place of migration and residence for a large number of Jews. Moreover, Medina was known as a fertile agricultural land and bustling trade. Judaism also occupy an important position in a religious context because of its strong relationship with the Prophets. Thus, Jews controlled the socio-economic and spiritual aspects in Medina. Given that strong position to Jews in Medina, both socially and religiously, Jews could not accept being an object of Prophet's *da'wah* (proselytization). Therefore, they showed their hostility by emphasizing hypocrites and Meccan polytheists.<sup>20</sup> A similar case occurred with Christians who had expanded to different locations in the first six to seven centuries AD. Before the Prophet (SAW) settled in Medina, Christians had lived there, though their life was not similar to Jews. It implies that Christianity and Judaism were the only known religions in Mecca and Medina prior to the prophethood of Muhammad (SAW).

### 3.2 Ideal Moral of Religious Moderation

*Wasat* refers to moderation in Arabic. A well-known hadith explained that the best difficulty is being the middle (medium). The fundamental message of Islam is moderation. The relevance of moderate views is an important aspect of diversity in all fields including religions, cultures, ethnicities, and nations as a whole. Moderation in Islam is a religious philosophy. The word '*wasat*' in Arabic has same meaning as the words *tawassut* (middle), *i'tidal* (fair), and *tawazun* (balanced). Thus, moderation in an Islamic perspective has at least three main meanings: intermediate, fair, and balanced. The middle is the original meaning of *wasat* while fair and balanced are meanings of *ta'wil* (far-meaning). Al-Tabari takes the meaning of fair *ta'wil* when interpreting the word *wasat* in Al-Baqarah: 143. He asserted that *wasat* means fair because it has a good meaning.

Additionally, Rahman like Al-Tabari, transformed the term *wasata* into fair. Rahman offered three justifications for considering the word *wasata* into the word fair.<sup>21</sup> Firstly, the word *wasat* linguistically means 'in the middle.' The position in the middle means being far from excessive and deficient ends because this position is far from the two extremes. Secondly, the word *wasat* (middle) means not inclined to one side with any of the disputing parties. *Wasat* also means fair. Thirdly, because God made Muslims witnesses, the verse (QS. Al-Baqarah 143) content is praised in the context of practicing religion and will serve as a witness of deeds. Then, the people who are just can only be true witnesses

Rahman also interpreted *wasat* as the best. QS. Al-Baqarah: 143 explained that Muslims are an *umma wasata*, which indicates the best people. QS. Ali Imran: 110 states: "You (Muslims) are the best people, born to men, (for you) told (to do) what is right, and forbid what is wrong, and believe

<sup>19</sup>M Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Al-Misbah," Jakarta: Lentera Hati 2 (2002).

<sup>20</sup>Jeffry Halverson, Steven Corman, and H Lloyd Goodall, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (Springer, 2011).

<sup>21</sup>Rahman Fazlur, "Framework for Interpreting the Eticho Legal Content of Qur'an London," (The Institute of Ismail Studies, 2004).

in Allah...". According to Fazlur Rahman, every verse of Qur'an has a basic idea, which brings blessings to all worlds. This basic idea prioritizes values of justice ('*adl*), brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), and equality (*musawah*). According to Rahman,<sup>22</sup> the contents of Qur'an must be understood by prioritizing moral values or having an ethical vision. We know that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is the best human being (a mercy for all creation) created by Allah in religious moderation from the specific laws. In moderation, religion should not cross the line by making the Prophet the supreme being. In straightforward language, religious moderation forbids deifying any noble personality.

As explained above, *umma wasata* or moderate ummah has three main characteristics: middle, just, and balanced. These three characteristics are not just limited to the meaning of a belief but a model of behaviour in all aspects of life. In other words, religious moderation is an essential aspect of Islamic model of life. Moderation contains many ramifications in various areas concerning Islam. The concept of moderation refers to important moral qualities for someone's life as well as the nation's and community's integrity and self-sense. Religious moderation, taught by Islam, contains most suitable values and practices to learn the benefit of humanity.

### 3.3 Indonesian Context

Despite of all the facts Puritan, radical, or extreme fanatic groups have emerged in almost all Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> In Indonesia, the ethics of reform era has opened the faucet of freedom more widely; dominant groups also started to show themselves more confidently.<sup>24</sup> However, it has resulted in tension, intolerance, and horizontal conflicts in society. Moreover, there have been vertical conflicts between extremist groups or *jihadis*<sup>25</sup> and the state in the form of terrorism.<sup>26</sup> Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia (HTI) wanted to change the form and basis of the Republic of Indonesia into a caliphate and change Pancasila as the nation's ideology into Islamic Shari'a; these intentions have been manifested in various activities.<sup>27</sup> For almost ten years HTI got a free stage.<sup>28</sup> On 12 August 2007, the climax was that the HTI massively celebrated the International Caliphate Conference (ICC) at Bung Karno Stadium (GBK) of Jakarta attended by more than 100,000 people.<sup>29</sup> The phenomenon of Islamist extremisms, such as the HTI, has led to horizontal tensions and social conflicts. The most prominent examples of pressure and intolerance destruct the basis of Ahmadiyya Islam and the expulsion of the Shia Islamic community from Sampang community.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Rahman, *Islam*.

<sup>23</sup>Ahmad Najib Burhani, "4. Liberal and Conservative Discourses in the Muhammadiyah: The Struggle for the Face of Reformist Islam in Indonesia," in *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam* (ISEAS Publishing, 2013), 105-44.

<sup>24</sup>Iffatin Nur et al., "Embracing Radicalism and Extremism in Indonesia with the Beauty of Islam," *Asian Research Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, (2020): 1-18.

<sup>25</sup>Doly Andhika Putra, and Ni Made Sumaryani, "Terrorism and Jihad in Islamic Perspective," *International Journal of Islamic Khazanah* 11, no. 2 (2021).

<sup>26</sup>Maghfur Ahmad et al., "The Sufi Order against Religious Radicalism in Indonesia," *HTS Theologesie Studies/Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021).

<sup>27</sup>Alexander R Arifianto, "Islamic Campus Preaching Organizations in Indonesia: Promoters of Moderation or Radicalism?," *Asian Security* 15, no. 3 (2019): 323-42.

<sup>28</sup>Anton Minardi, "The New Movement of Islamic Revivalist Accommodationist and Confrontationist (Prosperous Justice Party and Hizb Ut-Tahrir)," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 12, no. 2 (2019): 247-64.

<sup>29</sup>Ruslan Burhani, "Hizbut Tahrir Adakan Konferensi Khilafah Internasional [Hizb ut-Tahrir Holds International Khilafah Conference]," *Antaranews.Com*, no. 7 Agustus (2007).

<sup>30</sup>Ken Miichi and Yuka Kayane, "The Politics of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: The Shi'a Response to the Sampang Incidents of 2011-12," *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and-National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8, no. 1 (2020): 51-64.



The conflict does not only exist due to religions' differences but also accumulate several problems and interests, such as political, economic, and social issues. However, regardless of certain factors of interest, internal and external differences in religious understanding or views have caused conflicts between groups and probably became the primary reasons. These facts have proven the need for religious moderation.

In the early stage, the development of *Shia* and its *da'wah* patterns did not experience many conflicts with other groups. The principle of *taqiyah* is used to avoid pressure from the authorities. During the first period, relations between *Sunnis* and *Shiites* in Indonesia were, in general, very good and friendly. Therefore, this condition is unlike the condition that happens in other countries, such as Pakistan<sup>31</sup>, Iraq, or Saudi Arabia.<sup>32</sup> However, there have been several incidents; for example such as the assassination of Hamzah Fansuri for being accused of spreading the ideology of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.<sup>33</sup> However, the anti-*Shia* agenda in Indonesia has increased as an example of intolerance and extreme acts. Hundreds of *Shia* residents fled after the incident of burning their prayer rooms and houses in Nangkernang, Karang Gayam Village, Omben District. After the burning of residence, the *Shia* Muslims were still expelled from the refugee camps in Sampang in 2020. This expulsion was even supported by the district government, which did not conduct dialogues with the leader and residents of the *Shia*; consequently, the anti-*Shia* movement occurred. Finally, hundreds of Sampang *Shia* refugees were sworn to become *Sunnis* if they had been willingly to return home.

Other than *Shia* that were residing in Indonesia, there was another organization, called Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI). This organization was included in the minority group of Islamic organizations in Indonesia. Although, this group has been established in Indonesia since 1925, its existence is now being questioned. In the beginning, the question was a matter of belief about the concept of prophethood. The mainstream in Islam generally considers Ahmadi views, regarding Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the organization, deviating from Islamic teachings conveyed by "final prophet" Muhammad (*khatam an-nabiyyin*).<sup>34</sup> There are several incidents of intolerance experienced by Ahmadiyah, such as acts of violence against Ahmadiyah in Cikeusik 2011,<sup>35</sup> attack

<sup>31</sup>Shahbaz Ahmad Cheema, "Conceptualisation of 'Islamic State' by Pakistani Scholars: From Idealism to Minimalism," *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law and Practice* 18, no. 1 (2022): 87–109.

<sup>32</sup>Abul Kalam Azad, "The Question of India's Endangered Democracy in the Light of Intolerance Debate: Some Reflections," *Journal of Asian Social Science Research* 4, no. 1 SE-Articles (June 30, 2022): 87-104, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jassr.v4i1.67>; Moh Hasyim, "Shia: Its History and Development in Indonesia," *Analisa Journal of Social Science and Religion* 19, no. 2 (2012): 147-58.

<sup>33</sup>Oki Setiana Dewi, "Syiah: Dari Kemunculannya Hingga Perkembangannya Di Indonesia [Shia: From its emergence to its development in Indonesia]," *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 12, no. 2 (2016): 217-37.

<sup>34</sup>Ahmad Najib Burhani, "The Ahmadiyya and the Study of Comparative Religion in Indonesia: Controversies and Influences," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25, no. 2 (2014): 141-58.

<sup>35</sup>Bastiaan Scherpen, "Enforcing Religious Freedom in Indonesia: Muslim Elites and the Ahmadiyah Controversy after the 2011 Cikeusik Clash," *Regime Change, Democracy and Islam: The Case of Indonesia* (2013), 322-50.



on Ahmadiyah residents in East Lombok in 2018,<sup>36</sup> and attack on Ahmadiyah Mosque in Sintang in 2021.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike Shia and Ahmadiyah, HTI is an Islamic organization banned by Indonesian government because its concept contradicts Pancasila as basis of the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>38</sup> Hizbut-Tahrir (HT) is a pan-Islamic political movement dedicated to reshape Islamic caliphate by implementing sharia (Islamic laws) and spreading Islamic *da'wah* worldwide. HTI was introduced in Indonesia in 1982 by Abdul Rahman al-Baghdadi, an Australian HT activist. He was relocated to Bogor due to the request of KH Abdullah bin Nuh who served as the leader of Al-Ghazali Islamic Boarding School, Bogor.<sup>39</sup> Since then, this movement has been introduced on many campuses in Indonesia and popularized its mission among academics. As a result, HTI members are mostly intellectuals, especially students.

Therefore, the three case studies of Shia, Ahmadiyah, and HTI have described highly different interpretations of a belief and have led to create different religious organizations and sects in Indonesia. Islamic moderation in Indonesian contexts could be more widely applied by Muslims and non-Muslims to avoid radicalism, terrorism, and violence. For example, the 2019 presidential election shows an excessive attitude in siding one of contestants and has led to a prolonged sense of hostility. Supporters' barriers have not been completely resolved even though presidential election has passed more than two years ago. There is still tension between two supporter sides of the presidential candidates: Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto. Therefore, political passion is prioritized and no one follows the moderation attitude as taught by Islamic teachings. Indonesia is a very heterogeneous nation that requires a moderate attitude in all aspects of life. Diversity is a source of strength from a positive point of view, but it could be a frightening source of conflict if it is not managed well. Such a condition also proves that great work of religious moderation project should be socialized more widely to bring a great influence and cover all Indonesians. Moderate reaffirmation of religion is needed by Indonesia because this is the only concept to create Indonesian with pluralistic, peaceful, and democratic values.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.4 Solving Religious Conflicts in Indonesia

Social conflicts between Islamic organizations and beliefs are caused by different ways of thinking and interpreting their idiosyncratic beliefs.<sup>41</sup> Indonesia is a pluralistic and diverse country

<sup>36</sup>Lalu Goriadi Hartawan, R. R. Cahyowati, and Zunnuraeni Zunnuraeni, "Legal Protection of Ahmadiyah Citizens in Freedom and Belief in Religion," *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 6, no. 3 (2019): 984-89.

<sup>37</sup>Jeremy Menchik, "Moderate Muslims and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (2019): 415-33.

<sup>38</sup>Hesti Armiwulan, Debora Veronica Br Manik, and Rofi Aulia Rahman, "Mass Organization Disbandment in Indonesia: Is Democracy Embattled?," *Croatian International Relations Review* 27, no. 87 (2021): 177-98.

<sup>39</sup>Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "The Rise of Islamic Religious-Political Movements in Indonesia: The Background, Present Situation and Future," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 2, no. 2 (2008): 336-78.

<sup>40</sup>M Taufiq Rahman and Paelani Setia, "Pluralism in the Light of Islam," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i2.12269>.

<sup>41</sup>Fatemeh Sadeghi. "Post-Islamism: From Making Islam Democratic to the Politics of Myth." *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law and Practice* 17, no. 1 (2021): 3-18.

with many cultures and religions.<sup>42</sup> However, this country has serious issues regarding religious perceptions.

For example, the differences between *Sunni* and *Shia* beliefs in Indonesia are presented in Table 1. These differences would not find a solution if moderate Islamic thoughts are not applied. Thus, solutions could find a middle way that does not hurt both parties. Several studies on conflict resolution between the majority of Sunni-Muslim and minority of *Shia* in Sampang have discovered that space for reconciliation between the refugee community and the community in which they come from tends to close, especially in case of *Shia* refugees because main condition is repentance to return to *Sunni*. These conditions certainly burden *Shia* citizens. In Indonesia, the state does not have adequate capacity to resolve conflicts between majority and minority because it tends to succumb to pressure from the Sunni-Muslim majority. The government has made maximum efforts to resolve the *Shia* conflict. For example, the visit of President SBY and the Minister of Religion to Sampang as well as the formation of a reconciliation team led by the Chancellor of State Islamic University of Surabaya, Prof. Abdul Ala.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, the team only provides recommendations that are not implemented.

Table 1. Differences between *Shia* and *Sunni* Muslims

Indicators	Shia	Sunni
<i>Tauhid</i> Concept	Pure <i>Tauhid</i> must be conceived with Imamat, and Shiites consider Ali and the leaders of the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad as Imams.	the <i>Khilafah</i> and Imam are considered equivalent positions to the head of a state who could be elected through the assembly; thus, they are not related to <i>Tauhid</i> .
Pillars of Faith	Faith in Allah Faith in the Imamate Faith in Prophets, Apostles, Books, and Angels Faith in the Last Day Faith in God's justice	Faith in Allah Faith in the Angels Faith in Allah's Books Faith in Prophets and Apostles Faith in the Last Day Faith in Qada and Qadar
Pillars of Islam	<i>Shahada</i> is not included in the pillars of Islam, is just, and represents the creed that must be pledged.	<i>Shahada</i> is a requirement.
Ablution	Following the advice of Surah Al-Maidah verse 6	Following the <i>Sunnah</i>
Madhab	The Shah applies three main <i>Madhab</i> (Islamic schools): Zaydu, Ismail, and Ashariyya	The Sunni applies four main <i>Madhab</i> (Islamic schools): Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'I, and Hambali.

**Source:** Processed by Author<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, this extreme attitude is rooted in exclusivism, which assumes that the truth is singular and only belongs to a group. If truth claims are confined to personal territory, it would not be a source

<sup>42</sup> Enkin Asrawijaya, "Religious Life in Indonesia in the Study of Post-Modernism," *Khazanah Theologia* 4, no. 1 (2022): 49–64, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kt.v4i1.17871>.

<sup>43</sup>Mukhsin Achmad, Moch Khoiruddin, and Nur Ichwan, "From Personal to Communal: The Conflict among Sunni-Shiite in Sampang, East Java," *Sunan Kalijaga: International Journal of Islamic Civilization* 2, no. 1 (n.d.): 31-58.

<sup>44</sup>Muh Shohibul Itmam, "Pemikiran Islam Dalam Perspektif Sunni Dan Syi'ah [Islamic Thought in Sunni and Shia Perspectives]," *Jurnal Penelitian* 7, no. 2 (2013).

of conflict. In contrast, if the claim enters the public domain, then the claim of truth would become a source of a complicated conflict. For this reason, the role of government is necessary. Indonesia could neither succumb to the majority nor agree with a concept that violates the constitution, such as HTI, because extremist people disagrees with moderation. Based on the afore mentioned definition of religious moderation, religious extremism is defined as a perspective, attitude, and behavior that goes beyond the limits of moderation to understand and practice a religion. Religious moderation does not compromise on theological beliefs between religions but practice a firm attitude. Religious moderation is also not what Western culture perceived, which according to them is secular and liberal. Religious moderation is a part of religious perfection (*kaffah*) and constitutes a model of diversity with universal values, such as justice, equality, compassion, and balance.

### 3.5 Indicators of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation has four indicators: 1) national commitment, 2) tolerance, 3) anti-violence, and 4) accommodation of to local culture.<sup>45</sup> The first indicator, is national commitment, which postulates that religious moderation could be recognized, especially in Indonesian context. It is common to find fundamentalists who oppose religious teachings with national concepts and values. Fundamentalists assume that holy book determines everything in detail so that there is no room for '*ijtihad*' (independent reasoning). For example, a state based on Pancasila (five pillars of Indonesia's national ideology) is considered "*taghū*" (beyond the measure) because it is not based on Islamic Shari'ah.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, fundamentalists do not consider the reality that Indonesia consists of various ethnicities, religions, and races (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*). Therefore, they try to replace the basic ideology of the state with Islamic Shari'ah. Their understanding is more textual that is why they are more concerned with literal texts rather than substance. Additionally, the previous scholars see the essence of Pancasila as similar to Islamic values. Therefore, this statement is supported by other religious leaders who consider that Pancasila follows their religious values and norms. On that basis, the previous scholars and other religious leaders considered that Pancasila was most appropriate ideology for the state's base. Hence, religious moderation perceives that carrying out obligations as citizens is a form of performing their religious teachings.

The second indicator is tolerance, which explains that several series of riots in Indonesia are more inclined to have social, economic, political, and religious nuances; for example, the incident of an intolerant act in Indonesia's capital city during a regional head election. Intolerance conflicts have been recently crystallized using the pretexts of religions, cultures, politics, ethnicities, and the media as a triggering/manipulating tool. The latest survey by the Politics Research and Consulting (PRC) and the Indonesian Political Parameters (PPI) indicated that there are still some intolerant activities, ethnic and religious tolerance in Indonesia which is considered good.<sup>47</sup> Various tolerances in Indonesia include adherents of the majority religion in a society, the existence of other minority religions, Muslims' guarding a church at Christmas Mass, and mutual respect for other religions. Indonesia has built inter-religious and intra-religious tolerance. A tolerant world does not provide a room for *takfiri* (ex-communication), which disbelieve in different groups. Tolerance also

<sup>45</sup>Edi Junaedi, "Inilah Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Kemenag [This is Religious Moderation from the Perspective of the Ministry of Religion]," *Harmoni* 18, no. 2 (2019): 182-86.

<sup>46</sup>R Michael Feener, *Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia* (OUP Oxford, 2013).

<sup>47</sup>Yustinus Paat, "Survei: Toleransi Di Indonesia Saat Ini Dalam Situasi Baik [Survey: Tolerance in Indonesia is currently in a good situation]," *Beritasatu.com*, 2022, <https://www.beritasatu.com/news/899075/survei-toleransi-di-indonesia-saat-ini-dalam-situasi-baik>.

presupposes the absence of majority and minority dichotomies. Majority and minority groups have the same rights and obligations to maintain a peaceful life.<sup>48</sup>

The third indicator is non-violence which explains that religious moderation obligates people to obey the applicable laws and regulations. Therefore, Social systems should be changed constitutionally. It is unbearable to justify violence and radicalism in the name of religion or God. The main factors in the occurrence of violence and radicalism are the perception of injustice and threats. When these factors are framed ideologically, acts of violence in the name of religion and God are (perceived) right. Indonesia has gradually begun to issue regulations to prevent the occurrence of social violence, especially religious conflicts. Religious problems and conflicts which usually start from false information on the internet media. To reduce the misuse of information, the Indonesian government has stipulated the ITE law (UU ITE) to limit the public from making false or hoax arguments,<sup>49</sup> certifies *Dai* to counter radicalism,<sup>50</sup> and strengthens material or sharing sessions on religious moderation in the form of Religious Moderation Houses at several major universities in Indonesia.<sup>51</sup>

The fourth indicator is accommodating the local culture because for ascertain community, culture is a product of profane human traditions and is not worthy of being juxtaposed with sacred religion. However, this country has serious issues regarding religious perceptions. For example, the potential for radicalism potentially occurs in Tapanuli, an area that covers the west coast of North Sumatra to the coast of Lake Toba, Indonesia. In this area, a conflict occurred when a church was burnt in Padang Lawas of Tapanuli in 2011. The clashes between Muslims and non-Muslims in Portibi area of North Padang Lawas District in 2016 were related to the prohibition of worship for ethnic Chinese. A conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in Aek Badak n 2017 was related to public facility services. Meanwhile, in the Sipeng area, Mandailing Natal Regency, clashes occurred because of blasphemy by non-Muslims that triggered the residents.<sup>52</sup> The undeveloped value system of Tapanuli as an industrial or contemporary culture has made this problem more complicated. The awareness and worldview of global community are traditional and have the characteristics of a community, religious mystification, and a strong patron-client spirit. Moreover, the awareness and worldview of the global community hold an awareness of life, disagree with modernization or industrialization, and only take place in physical structures. If these conflicts continuously happen, Indonesia will suffer. Society has to learn that a nation could solve any issue without shedding blood. Cultural understanding plays a big role in this incident because Indonesians have diverse backgrounds. Therefore, many cultures are created and they faced a conflict if they are combined

<sup>48</sup>Bassem Jamil Kheireddine, Ana Maria Soares, and Ricardo Gouveia Rodrigues, "Understanding (in) Tolerance between Hosts and Refugees in Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2020.

<sup>49</sup>Zico Junius Fernando et al., "The Freedom of Expression in Indonesia," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022): 2103944.

<sup>50</sup>Abd Munib, "Membongkar Wacana Sertifikasi Dai Menangkal Radikalisme Dalam Program Televisi [Uncovering Dai's Certification Discourse Against Radicalism in Television Programs]," *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 6, no. 1 (2021): 53-66.

<sup>51</sup>Wildani Hefni, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ruang Digital: Studi Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama Di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri [Religious Moderation in the Digital Space: A Study of Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in State Islamic Religious Universities]," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 13, no. 1 (2020): 1-22.

<sup>52</sup>Puji Kurniawan, "Dialog Agama Dan Budaya; Menangkal Gerakan Radikalisme Di Tapanuli [Religious and Cultural Dialogue; Countering the Radicalism Movement in Tapanuli]," *Jurnal Al-Maqasid: Jurnal Ilmu Kesyarifan Dan Keperdataan* 4, no. 2 (2018): 89-104.

with religious understanding.<sup>53</sup> For this reason, Indonesia has started moderation programs on the basis of moderate attitude toward religion who has a friendly and non-rigid tendency toward local traditions and culture which create belief.

Based on the four indicators, Indonesian government has serious conflicts if the problem of different interpretations of religion continuous to occurs. The Indonesian government has applied several concepts to find the middle point of any differences in religious views in society and aggressively stipulated laws and regulations, such as maintaining social media traffic with ITE law, conducting the *Da'i* Certification, and collaborating with universities in Indonesia to develop religious moderation modules. Finding a certain middle point aims to find a solution so that violence will not occur again in future.

Each verse of Qur'ān has a basic idea that provides a blessing to all world. This basic idea puts forward the values of justice (*adl*), brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), and equality (*musawah*). According to Rahman, understanding the contents of Qur'ān must prioritize moral values or have an ethical vision. Moderately, religion should not cross the line by making the Prophet as God. In other words, religious moderation forbids the deification of any noble being. The afore mentioned explanation denotes that the moderate *umma* has three main characteristics middle, fair, and balanced characteristics. The contradiction between moderate model of Indonesian Islam and 'pure' Arabic Islam shows that religious moderation is not religious teaching. The strict and violent 'purification' movement has received an opposite response from moderate groups and managed to become liberals. The extreme 'purification' movement and extreme liberal movement are very permissive towards other cultures and civilizations that are a serious threat for religious moderation, especially in Indonesia. Islamic moderation model is expected to solve intolerance and radicalism problems. Therefore, Islamic moderation should be a mainstream model for Islamic diversity, not only in Indonesia but also in other countries of the world.

#### 4. Conclusion

Muslims have a moderate character because Islam's central doctrine is religious moderation. The spirit of moderation is not leaning towards exaggeration (*ifrāt*) or underestimating (*tafrīt*) various issues related to religion or the world. The concept of moderation does not teach Muslims to extremely apply Islamic doctrine and oversimplify religious provisions. Therefore, the moderation teachings have not only made Muslims materialistic but they also enabled them to focus on the spiritual aspects of life. Muslims must synergize material and spiritual rights, and they should not neglect one side of the other. This synergy is in harmony with human nature, which consists of body and spirit. Moderation is not limited to religious attitudes but includes all aspects of life. Therefore, this study implicates that if Fazlur Rehman's Islamic moderation concepts are practiced comprehensively in Indonesia then social harmony would prevail as a social phenomenon. Moreover, due to this social harmony competition and rivalry between religions and government in Indonesia would not lead to horizontal or vertical conflicts. Since, the predominant religion in Indonesia is Islam, therefore behavior of its followers could significantly impact the country.

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<sup>53</sup>Colin Murray Parkes, Pittu Laungani, and Bill Young, "Culture and Religion," in *Death and Bereavement across Cultures* (Routledge, 2015), 9-20.

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